

**FREE ISSUE**

**NEWS** PS5 AND XBOX SERIES X

**PREVIEW** DYING LIGHT 2

ISSUE 68 FEBRUARY 2020

# Walmart Gamecenter

THE LATEST NEWS, REVIEWS, PREVIEWS, AND PLAYING TIPS INSIDE!

**DOOM  
ETERNAL  
POSTER**

**FREE  
INSIDE**

## BIOMUTANT

A KUNG-FU RPG FABLE

**PLUS** | 2020 PREVIEW FEATURE

# BIOMU



PC DVD ROM

PS4

XBOX ONE

THE NORDIC

X  
101

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BIOMUTANT

Get ready to unleash your inner beast in this action-packed RPG.



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The episodic tale of brotherhood and survival is now out in one collection.



# welcome

FROM THE EDITORS



**W**elcome to the first *Walmart Gamecenter* of 2020. Even typing out that year somehow feels futuristic. When we were growing up, it was a safe bet that any given sci-fi movie or video game would be set in the 2020s. Now we're living in that tomorrow, though there's admittedly a lot less neon and a lot fewer flying cars than promised.

Of course, starting a new year—and, in this case, a whole new decade—always offers a great opportunity to reflect on the past. In 2019 we saw the launch of memorable titles like *Control*, *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice*, and *Death Stranding*, to name just a few. Throughout the decade, we played such classics as *Red Dead Redemption*, *Mass Effect 2*, *BioShock Infinite*, *Dark Souls*, *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, *The Last of Us*—and the list definitely goes on from there. Excitingly, each of the last four games we mentioned has a sequel or spiritual successor on the way, so the new decade is already off to a promising start.

This year alone is poised to bring major developments to the gaming world. In this issue's news section you can read more

about Microsoft's next-generation console, the Xbox Series X, as well as the first officially announced game for Sony's PlayStation 5. Both those next-gen consoles are scheduled to arrive by the end of this year, meaning we're liable to witness a sea change in the scope and technology of the biggest releases.

We've also got a look ahead to some of 2020's highly anticipated games. Our cover story this month delves into the furry chaos of *Biomutant*, an open-world action game set in a world full of mutated animals. Why video games have taken so long to give rodents swords, mechs, wingsuits, and jetsacks, we can't rightly say, but better late than never.

Our other previews in this issue showcase the variety the coming year has in store. *Dying Light 2* drops you into a zombie-infested city where your choices can impact your surroundings in big and unexpected ways. *Nioh 2* takes you to

medieval Japan for mystical swordplay in the vein of *Dark Souls*, while *Trials of Mana* returns to an action role-playing classic. Last but not least, *LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga*

brings you to a galaxy far, far away for an adventure that spans generations.

Of course, those titles are just the tip of the iceberg, so we've also got a special feature running down 20 more games we can't wait to play in 2020. The next 12 months are already looking absolutely stacked—and there are no doubt plenty of surprises headed our way, too.

Be sure to keep reading *Walmart Gamecenter*, the magazine that keeps you at the center of all things gaming.

Josh Harmon and Mollie L. Patterson

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FEBRUARY 2020

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ONWARD TO ADVENTURE!

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# JOURNEY TO THE SAVAGE PLANET



WELCOME TO THE PIONEER PROGRAM! As the newest recruit of Kindred Aerospace – The 4th best interstellar space exploration company – Your job is to determine if planet AR-Y 26 is fit for humans. True, you're short on equipment or plans. You'll figure it out. Or not. Good luck!



TYPHOON  
STUDIOS

505  
GAMES

PS4

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## XBOX'S NEW CONSOLE REVEALED—AND IT'S LAUNCHING THIS YEAR

Taking the stage at the 2019 Game Awards this past December, head of Xbox Phil Spencer revealed the name of the new Xbox and when it's launching, as well as another game that will accompany that launch next to *Halo Infinite*.

Initially unveiled as the Xbox Series X, the new console is actually just called,



well, Xbox. However, the Series X moniker still denotes the next generation of Xbox consoles and Microsoft's strategy for the brand moving forward. This new Xbox is officially launching during the holiday 2020 period.

Similar to how the Xbox One X launched as an upgraded mid-generation Xbox One, Xbox Series X will continue that progression. The new Xbox will have twice the power of the Xbox One X, launching with 4K resolution and a framerate of 60 frames per second (fps) as its base standard. However, according to Spencer, Xbox is targeting 8K and 120 fps, though not at the same time, later in the console's lifespan. In other words, the capabilities are there, but it's up to software developers to take advantage.

In addition to these impressive base specs, the new Xbox comes with a built-in solid state drive (SSD) that will practically eliminate loading times, as well as ray-tracing capabilities to enhance reflections and volumetric lighting. It will also launch with an upgraded version of the Xbox One controller, with an updated D-pad and a share button specifi-

cally designed to make it easier to upload screenshots and clips to Xbox's generous social functions and community boards.

Most important to Xbox owners, however, is backward compatibility, and the Series X is continuing Microsoft's dedication to this feature. Every Xbox One game you own will be playable on Series X consoles, and we can probably expect enhanced versions similar to what we currently enjoy when playing older games on the Xbox One X. The same applies to Xbox 360 and original Xbox games that are backwards compatible.

Initially unveiled as the Xbox Series X, the new console is actually just called, well, Xbox.

Looking to the future, *Halo Infinite* was already announced as a cross-gen game, meaning when it launches alongside the Series X it'll also come to Xbox One. Spencer also revealed a second first-party launch title for the new Xbox at The Game Awards. *Senua's Saga: Hellblade II*, will continue the critically acclaimed saga of *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*. On top of that, Spencer said that Xbox Game Studios developers are already working on 15 more Xbox exclusives.

Check out Walmart.com or your local Walmart store for the latest developments on preordering the Xbox Series X.

# 60FPS

Framerate of *Doom* and *Doom II* on current consoles after a recent patch, the first time in history those games have run at that speed

# 2

Additional buttons the DualShock 4 can now have using Sony's official Back Button Attachment

# \$5,650

Cost of Louis Vuitton's *League of Legends*-inspired LVXL01 Leather Biker Jacket

# \$3 million

Prize money being offered up in the first year of *Apex Legends* Global Series esports league

# 15

Number of friends you can invite to your own experimental island in *Fortnite*'s new Battle Lab



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FEB

14 DARKSIDERS GENESIS  
THQ NORDIC / XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH25 MEGA MAN ZERO/ZX LEGACY COLLECTION  
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MAY

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BANDAI NAMCO / XBOX ONE, PS429 THE LAST OF US PART II  
SONY / PS4MLB THE SHOW  
AIMS FOR OTHER  
CONSOLES

While most of today's hottest sports games are released on all systems, one of America's pastimes in particular has seen its best video game representation remain exclusive: baseball.

Developed by Sony Interactive Entertainment's San Diego Studio, *MLB The*



*Show* has been the preeminent baseball video game franchise for years. Ever since it kicked off as *MLB '98* back on the original PlayStation in 1997, the series has been the biggest name in baseball, but it's also remained exclusive to Sony's PlayStation consoles.

In a shocking development, however, that's about to change. As part of an announcement made in conjunction with the MLB and the Major League Baseball Players Association, Sony Interactive Entertainment and San Diego Studio have entered into multi-year extensions to continue development and distribution of *MLB The Show*. As part of that extension, the series will now come to non-Sony consoles as early as 2021.

While which platforms *MLB The Show* will be coming to remains to be seen, it's exciting news for baseball fans everywhere. Now even more players will be able to enjoy one of the greatest gaming franchises based around one of the greatest sports.

For now, preorder *MLB The Show 20* on PlayStation 4 on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store. It's slated for release this March.

SAY HELLO TO GODFALL,  
THE FIRST PLAYSTATION 5 GAME

The PlayStation 5 won't arrive until the end of the year, but we already know one of the games we'll be playing on Sony's next-generation box. During The Game Awards in December, publisher Gearbox Software and developer Counterplay Games revealed *Godfall*, an action RPG slated to launch on PS5 in late 2020.

*Godfall* bills itself as a "looter-slasher," a spin on the increasingly popular "looter-shooter" genre embodied by series like *Destiny* and *Borderlands*. As in those games, players will constantly discover new gear to upgrade their characters as they take on quests in single-player or online co-op. Rather than emphasizing ranged weaponry, however, *Godfall* will place the focus on melee combat, a shift befitting the game's fantasy setting. Players will control a knight in one of three primary character classes, doing battle in



a world of magic and monsters to avert an impending apocalypse.

The small taste we've gotten of in-engine visuals are an impressive leap forward, with weather effects like nothing we've seen on the current consoles.

As next-gen approaches, you'll be able to preorder *Godfall* and the PlayStation 5 at Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.





## NEW PARTNERSHIP PROMISES BRIGHT FUTURE FOR THE WITCHER

While *The Witcher* has become a major franchise in the world of video games, and a huge success for Polish developer CD Projekt Red, there's still a lot more that could be done with the saga in the future.

To help build toward that, the team's parent company CD Projekt recently announced that it has worked out a deeper relationship with Andrzej Sapkowski, the author of the original *The Witcher* series. According to the announcement, the agreement "satisfied and fully clarifies the needs and expectations of both parties, past and present."

In addition, this new agreement will help set a framework for the future cooperation between the two sides. Under the new agreement, CD Projekt will be granted new rights surrounding *The Witcher* series, while also confirming the company's access to the intellectual property of *The Witcher*'s world for upcoming projects such as video games, graphic novels, board games, and merchandise.

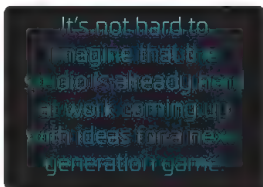
"We've always admired Mr. Andrzej

Sapkowski's works—a great inspiration for the team here at CD Projekt Red," said CD Projekt's president and joint CEO Adam Kiciński as part of the announcement. "I believe today marks a new stage in our continued relationship."

While there are no hints yet on what the future of *The Witcher* will bring from the minds at CD Projekt Red, it's not hard to imagine that the studio is already busy coming up with ideas for a next-generation game set in that universe. It's also probably a good assumption that some of the things

the developer is crafting for its massive upcoming RPG *Cyberpunk 2077* will help influence the next *Witcher* game. Whether we see more adventures from Geralt of Rivia, or set off on an adventure with a new protagonist, the future of the series now looks brighter than ever.

Speaking of *Cyberpunk 2077*, if you haven't already preordered your copy, don't hesitate to do so at Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.



## "BABY YODA" MAKES HIS GAMING DEBUT

If you've watched the first season of *The Mandalorian*—or spent any time on social media in the last three months, really—you're probably familiar with the newest icon of the *Star Wars* universe: a cuddly tyke from the same mysterious species as Master Yoda. Though he's officially known as "The Child," fans have taken to calling him "Baby Yoda" for obvious reasons. The tiny green phenom might just be last year's breakout TV star, and now he's extended his dominance to the world of gaming with a cameo in *The Sims 4*.



In a recent update to the mega-popular life-simulation game, EA and Maxis added a statue of the cuddliest Force user in the galaxy, which players can use to decorate their *Sims*' homes. The addition stems from the same partnership between EA and Disney that's brought us games like *Star Wars Battlefront II* and *Jedi: Fallen Order*. Here's hoping we'll see Baby Yoda crossovers in other EA hits like *Madden NFL*.

Until that day arrives, you can shop the latest *Star Wars* video games at your local Walmart store and Walmart.com.



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# JOURNEY TO THE SAVAGE PLANET

PUBLISHER 505 GAMES DEVELOPER TYPHOON STUDIOS PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC, RELEASE DATE 01 28 2020

"We wanted to make an adventure game where the adventure was its own reward. *Journey to the Savage Planet* is a first-person exploration and adventure game that players can explore in single-player mode or with a friend in online two-player co-op. You can expect your adventure to be filled with weird and wonderful creatures as you assume the role of an employee of Kindred Aerospace, which proudly touts itself as the fourth-best interstellar exploration company. Cataloguing alien flora and fauna is your primary mission to determine if this strange new planet is fit for human habitation, but a mysterious alien presence slowly reveals that you are not alone. It's an optimistic and humorous space adventure that we hope reminds players of the Golden Age of Science Fiction, and we've packed it with dozens of weird critters, hundreds of secrets, and other surprises for players to discover along the way."

**ALEX HUTCHINSON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER, TYPHOON STUDIOS**

We wanted to make an adventure game where the adventure was its own reward.





s to play



## MARVEL'S IRON MAN VR

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / DEVELOPER CAMOUFLAJE / PLATFORMS PSVR / RELEASE DATE 05 15 2020

If Tony Stark was a real person in 2020, he'd undoubtedly devise a VR system to test new Iron Man suit prototypes... and then license this tech to Sony to make an Iron Man game. And while that's not the premise of *Iron Man VR*, this does make you feel like you're the man in the iron mask. Inspired by both the comics and the movies (though it's not connected to either), the game not only has you flying, shooting, and solving situational problems as the titular superhero, but also taking on both Ghost (who you may remember from the movie *Ant-Man and the Wasp*) and your own demons. *Iron Man VR* even boasts a new Iron Man suit designed by comic book guy Adi Granov, who drew the miniseries *Iron Man: Extremis*, did concept art for the movies *Iron Man* and *The Avengers*, and designed the Velocity Suit for Insomniac's *Spider-Man*.

The game even boasts a new Iron Man suit designed by comic book guy Adi Granov.



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## TOKYO MIRAGE SESSIONS #FE ENCORE

PUBLISHER NINTENDO DEVELOPER ATLUS PLATFORMS SWITCH-1 RELEASE DATE 01.17.2020

Five years ago, *Tokyo Mirage Sessions #FE* brought the iconic worlds of the *Shin Megami Tensei* franchise and *Fire Emblem* games together on the Wii U. Now, this new version brings the role-playing game to the Switch, and with it some new playable characters, music, and story elements. It's also based on the American version of the original game, which had some localization changes. But like both versions of the original, this isn't a *Smash Bros.*-esque fighting game. Instead, it has characters from both universes meeting up in modern-day Tokyo (or, rather, five-years-ago Tokyo) as they try to rid the city of evil spirits called Mirages that feed on people's creative energy. Doing so has players utilizing a turn-based combat system, with your party employing three characters, two of whom can be swapped at any time, including mid-battle.

This new version brings the role-playing game to the Switch, and with it some new playable characters, music, and story elements.







# DRAGON BALL Z: KAKAROT

PUBLISHER BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA INC. ; DEVELOPER CYBERCONNECT2 ; PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4 ; RELEASE DATE 01.17.2020

"If you're a *Dragon Ball Z* fan, you'll be able to re-experience all the iconic scenes and epic battles as the anime comes to life in an all-new way in this action role playing game. Not only will you be able to play as Goku and such fan-favorite Z-Warriors as Gohan, Piccolo, and Vegeta, but you'll also be able to call in support from such assist characters as Krillin, Yamcha, and more. While there's been a ton of great *D.B.Z.* games this past console generation, *Kakarot* is really a fan's dream come true as it enables [you] to experience life as Goku. Fans will be able to explore the world of *D.B.Z.* as they fly, fish, train and most importantly, eat like Goku. You'll also do battle against the universe's greatest foes in real time as Goku or other playable characters, while also completing fun sidequests and minigames."

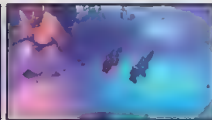
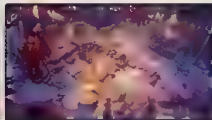
While there's been a ton of great *D.B.Z.* games this past console generation, *Kakarot* is really a fan's dream come true.

 MARK RELIGIOSO, NORTH & SOUTH AMERICA BRAND MANAGER, BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA INC.

# DARKSIDERS GENESIS

**ALL CONSOLES: 2/14/2020 (VALENTINE'S DAY)**

**PC/STADIA: 12/5/2019**



XBOX ONE

PS4



Blood and Gore  
Language  
Violence

ESRB

Users Interact

THQ NORDIC

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s to play

5

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## LIFE IS STRANGE 2

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX DEVELOPER DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT, PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC RELEASE DATE 02.04.2020

"*Life is Strange 2* is a graphic adventure game that tells the story of two brothers, Sean and Daniel Diaz, 16 and 9 years old, respectively, who are forced to flee their hometown of Seattle following a tragic event. Over the course of their journey they meet many colorful characters and discover another side of society. Players have to take care of their younger brother, who is gifted with telekinesis, forcing them to make difficult choices. Every choice and every action will have direct consequences for how Daniel is shaped, and Daniel will learn from the player's decisions and grow up based off of them. One of our favorite changes [from the first game] is how Daniel is shaped by player actions and how the ending of the game reflects those decisions. This collected edition has all five episodes and 'The Awesome Adventures of Captain Spirit' all in one package."

**MICHEL KOCH, CO-CREATIVE DIRECTOR, DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT**

Players have to take care of their younger brother, who is gifted with telekinesis, forcing them to make difficult choices.





# 2020

A LOOK AHEAD TO THE MOST EXCITING GAMES OF THE YEAR

Putting together this look at the year ahead proved to be a bit more of a challenge than usual. With two new consoles on the way, there are no doubt countless launch titles and cross-gen ports still to be announced. But if anything, that uncertainty just proves how incredible 2020's lineup is shaping up to be. Even with unavoidable blind spots, the 20 games we settled on are more than enough to excite any gamer



ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW HORIZONS

*Animal Crossing* has always offered a relaxing escape to nature, a kind of slow-paced virtual vacation wherein your biggest stress is paying off extortionist raccoon Tom Nook. *New Horizons* doubles down on the chill vibes by sending you to a deserted island to build a new community. Deeper customization and co-op for up to eight players make this an exciting sequel for existing fans, but, as the series' Switch debut, it's also the perfect starting point for newcomers.

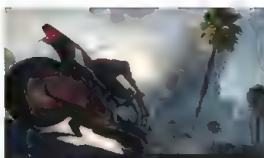
PUBLISHER NINTENDO DEVELOPER NINTENDO EPO  
PLATFORMS SWITCH RELEASE DATE 03/20/2020



BRAVELY DEFAULT II

While 2016 saw the release of *Bravely Second: End Layer*, it seems we'll now be getting a more direct follow-up to the 3DS's *Bravely Default*. In *Bravely Default II*, the new Heroes of Light set off in search of four crystals scattered across the world. From the same team that brought us the *Bravely* series and *Octopath Traveler*, *Bravely Default II* will no doubt engross fans in another blend of classic RPG themes and modern-era gameplay.

PUBLISHER NINTENDO DEVELOPER TEAM ASANO  
PLATFORMS SWITCH RELEASE DATE TBA 2020



CYBERPUNK 2077

"Immersion" is often used to describe games, but the truth is it's rare for a game to feel like a living, breathing world. *Cyberpunk 2077* might crack the code. Night City's richly detailed with the hustle and bustle of a grounded sci-fi setting, and since many of the choices you make in the game will have a significant impact on the game itself, *Cyberpunk 2077* will feel like a constantly evolving experience.

PUBLISHER CD PROJEKT DEVELOPER CD PROJEKT RED  
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE PS4 PC  
RELEASE DATE 09/17/2020



ELDEN RING

*Elden Ring* is still mostly a mystery, as we don't have much to go on in terms of gameplay details or even the basic story. But what we do know is that Hidetaka Miyazaki—who basically defined the previous decade in gaming with *Dark Souls*, *Bloodborne*, and *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice*—and *Game of Thrones* creator George R.R. Martin are teaming up to make it. Seriously, what else do you need to be excited?

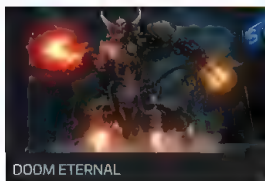
PUBLISHER BANDAI NAMCO DEVELOPER FROMSOFTWARE  
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC RELEASE DATE TBA



FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE

Yes, it's true—*Final Fantasy VII Remake* is finally almost here. The classic PlayStation RPG is now reborn as a high-fidelity, fully 3D experience, bringing the struggles of Avalanche members Cloud, Barrett, and Tifa to life like never before. With an expanded story, faster paced battles, and a host of other improvements, *FFVII Remake* promises to be the best way to return to—or play for the first time—one of the best RPGs there's ever been.

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX DEVELOPER SQUARE ENIX  
PLATFORMS PS4 RELEASE DATE 04 10 2020



DOOM ETERNAL

2016's *Doom* reboot revitalized the franchise while still paying homage to what made it great in the first place. *Doom Eternal* is looking to continue this upward trend—literally—by taking the fight to Earth and the heavens themselves. Expect new weapons like a shotgun with a grappling hook on it (yes, seriously), new modes like the asymmetrical multiplayer Battlemode, and a host of new enemies to rip and tear. It's time to dust off that BFG.

PUBLISHER BETHESDA SOFTWORKS DEVELOPER ID SOFTWARE  
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH, PC  
RELEASE DATE 03 20 2020 (SWITCH TBA 2020)



FAST & FURIOUS: CROSSROADS

*Fast & Furious* has made the jump to the world of gaming before—with varying degrees of success—but *Crossroads* looks to be the first adaptation that truly captures the vehicular insanity of the most recent films. The story-driven experience will feature driving action that's heavy on spectacle, with big jumps, explosions, and at least one machine-gun-equipped hovercraft. Expect to see familiar faces Dom Toretto (Vin Diesel), Letty Ortiz (Michelle Rodriguez), and Roman Pearce (Tyrese Gibson) alongside original characters.

PUBLISHER BANDAI NAMCO DEVELOPER SLIGHTLY MAD  
STUDIO'S PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC  
RELEASE DATE 05 2020



GHOST OF TSUSHIMA

*Ghost of Tsushima* might look like just another action game set in historical Japan, but this isn't just a *Sekiro* or *Nioh* clone. For one thing, *Ghost* has an open world and a heavy emphasis on open-ended exploration. It's also grounded in reality rather than fantasy, with a marked absence of demons or magical attacks. As the last samurai on Tsushima island during the 1270s Mongol invasion, you'll instead rely on true-to-life swordplay and stealth to survive—a distinction that's piqued our interest.

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT  
DEVELOPER SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS  
PLATFORMS PS4 RELEASE DATE SUMMER 2020





**HALO INFINITE**

*Halo Infinite*, which developer 343 Industries has referred to as a "spiritual reboot," has a lot riding on it. It's a launch title for the new Xbox console (as well as coming to Xbox One and Windows), it's the first game to use the new Slipspace engine, and it's a sequel to one of the most storied franchises in existence. However, if anyone can shoulder that burden, it's Master Chief, who's back in the spotlight for *Infinite*.

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER 343 INDUSTRIES, SKYBOX LABS PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X, XBOX ONE, PC RELEASE DATE FALL 2020



**MARVEL'S AVENGERS**

Square Enix looks set to deliver the biggest superhero game ever made with *Marvel's Avengers*. This sweeping adventure will let you play as many of the iconic superteam in an original story, with gameplay tailored to highlight each hero's distinctive abilities. Iron Man flies and shoots repulsor beams, Thor chucks his hammer, and so on. Between single-player, replayable co-op missions, and a loot system, *Avengers* could be as beefy as its heroes.

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX DEVELOPER CRYSTAL DYNAMICS, EIDOS MONTREAL PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC RELEASE DATE 09 04 2020



**NO MORE HEROES III**

*Travis Strikes Again: No More Heroes* was a fun diversion, but fans of Travis Touchdown have been waiting for a new numbered entry in the series for years. Thanks to the Switch, we finally have a console that can handle all the wand-wagging required to wield Travis' beam katana to its fullest potential. This time, Travis isn't just fighting for himself, but for the fate of the world. Maybe there are still heroes after all.

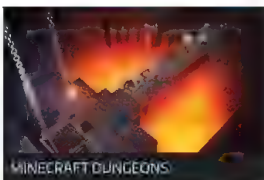
PUBLISHER GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE DEVELOPER GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE PLATFORMS SWITCH RELEASE DATE TBA 2020



**THE LAST OF US PART II**

Just as Naughty Dog's groundbreaking *The Last of Us* helped close out the PlayStation 3, its sequel will do the same for the PS4. The system will certainly be going out with a bang, as *The Last of Us II* looks to be one of the most ambitious, emotional, and technically impressive works gaming has ever seen. But great as it is to have Joel and Ellie back, their return means another round of hardships for both them and us.

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT DEVELOPER NAUGHTY DOG PLATFORMS PS4 RELEASE DATE 05 29 2020



**MINECRAFT DUNGEONS**

It took nine years, but *Minecraft* is finally getting its first official follow-up from the game's main developer, Mojang. Rather than a sequel, however, *Minecraft Dungeons* merges everyone's favorite world-builder together with classic dungeon crawlers. Up to four players can band together to explore randomly generated lairs filled with creatures, traps, and loot. *Minecraft Dungeons* looks perfect for those times when you want less building and more battling.

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER MOJANG PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH, PC RELEASE DATE 04 2020



**OUTRIDERS**

A new cooperative shooter from People Can Fly—the studio behind the ridiculously profane *Bulletstorm*—*Outriders* takes place in a future when Earth is nearly uninhabitable, forcing humanity to seek out a new home on the planet Enoch. The studio promises more of the imaginative weaponry it's known for, with a shift to a darker, more serious story. Gameplay details remain scarce, but the alien foes you'll be battling (with up to two friends) look massive and menacing.

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX DEVELOPER PEOPLE CAN FLY PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC RELEASE DATE 03 2020



Fresh off the success of *Friday the 13th: The Game*, developer IllFonic is turning another classic movie into an asymmetrical multiplayer thriller. In *Predator: Hunting Grounds*, one player will take on the role of the titular alien hunter, using tech to pick off the other four, who work together as a military fireteam. These human commandos aren't just trying to survive, however. They also need to fight against AI-controlled soldiers and complete objectives.

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT  
DEVELOPER ILLFONIC PLATFORMS PS4  
RELEASE DATE 04 24 2020



*Rainbow Six Siege* is undoubtedly a powerhouse in competitive FPS gaming, but instead of giving it a sequel, Ubisoft is taking a risk on *Rainbow Six Quarantine*. Seemingly a co-op spin-off of *Siege*'s popular Outbreak event, *Quarantine* lets up to three players team up to take on enemy AI in a Zombies-style campaign. It might seem like a strange direction for the series, but Ubisoft has earned our trust with *Siege*'s continual support.

PUBLISHER UBISOFT DEVELOPER UBISOFT MONTREAL  
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC RELEASE DATE  
TBA 2020



Hot on the heels of 2019's incredible *Resident Evil 2*, Capcom is already set to breathe new life into another classic. Taking place both before and after the events of *RE2*, *Resident Evil 3* sees original heroine Jill Valentine attempting to escape a crumbling Raccoon City in an adventure that's more action-oriented than its predecessors. And, in a surprise bonus, it's being bundled with the new 4-vs.-1 multiplayer experience *Resident Evil: Resistance*.

PUBLISHER CAPCOM DEVELOPER CAPCOM NEOBARDS  
ENTERTAINMENT PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC  
RELEASE DATE 04 03 2020



In 2012 inXile headed to Kickstarter to revive the 1988 RPG *Wasteland* with a modern sequel. Released two years later, *Wasteland 2* proved to be a hit with fans of classic role-playing, and this time we won't have to wait decades for a follow-up. *Wasteland 3* transplants the post-apocalyptic fun to Colorado, a more varied locale than the Southwestern states featured in the past two games. But all the top-view, isometric camera and deep turn-based combat will remain intact.

PUBLISHER DEEP SILVER DEVELOPER INXILE  
ENTERTAINMENT PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC  
RELEASE DATE 05 19 2020



*Watch Dogs: Legion* seems too big to be true. The premise of playing as anyone in a realistically recreated near future London sounds like one of those concepts that just won't work, but *Legion* is aiming for the bleachers. Through a clever role playing system, *Legion* lets you build a team of hacktivists that suits your playstyle and fulfills your revolutionary needs. It's a bold risk, but sometimes you need to take risks to change the world.

PUBLISHER UBISOFT DEVELOPER UBISOFT TORONTO  
PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC  
RELEASE DATE TBA



While Sega's *Yakuza* series has long been known for taking risks, the upcoming seventh main chapter of the franchise will be unlike anything seen before. In *Yakuza: Like a Dragon*, new protagonist Ichiban Kasuga walks the streets of Yokohama's Isezaki Jincho district. His adventures will play out via RPG-like mechanics, such as turn-based combat and deeper character-building elements. *Yakuza: Like a Dragon* promises to be a fresh start for the series both for new players and longtime fans alike.

PUBLISHER SEGA DEVELOPER RYU GA GOTOKU STUDIO  
PLATFORMS PS4 RELEASE DATE TBA 2020

\* PREORDER



# BIOMUTANT

## A KUNG-FU FAIRY TALE

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

### FACT FILE

PUBLISHER  
THQ NORDIC  
DEVELOPER  
EXPERIMENT 101  
PLATFORMS  
XBOX ONE, PS4, PC  
RELEASE DATE  
2020

**B**iomutant is pretty much destined to become a cult classic. Its publisher, THQ Nordic, is historically best-known for series like *Darksiders*, *de Blob*, and *Red Faction*, and developer Experiment 101 is composed of folks who created *Just Cause*.

But the biggest reason why *Biomutant* will most certainly be beloved by fans when it finally launches is that it's "weird in a good way."

That's the phrase that Experiment 101 studio head Stefan Ljungqvist consistently used to describe the

game and its world. Everything about *Biomutant* is "weird in a good way," from its anthropomorphic kung-fu fighting characters to its "free-flowing" approach to combat, narrative branching, and open-world game design in general.

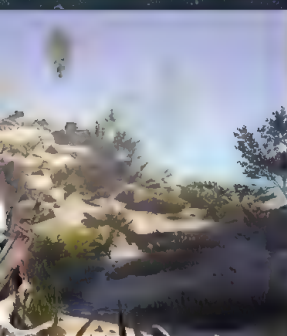
The story is also "weird in a good way." Resembling an apocalyptic fairy tale, *Biomutant* takes place in a world where mutated, anthropomorphic creatures have split up into different tribes following an ecological disaster and monsters known as Wordeaters threaten the planet's Tree of Life. As a wandering adventurer, it's the







The biggest reason why *Biomutant* will most certainly be beloved by fans when it finally launches is that it's "weird in a good way."



The game world mixes more tranquil natural environments with decidedly post-apocalyptic scenery.

player's choice to either unite the tribes and stop the end of the world from happening, or become the harbinger of doom itself.

*Biomutant's* campaign will rely on the "red line" missions, as Ljungqvist described the main story, which sees players taking on the Wordeaters. Additional missions that players can take on for the different Tribes will also have a large impact on the open world.

"There's a whole 'separate' layer of working with the Tribes and resolving the Tribe war, a wide cast of quirky side characters, each with

## RELEASE DATE BLUES

*Biomutant* has been one of our most anticipated games for a while now. That's not just because it's exactly the kind of immersive, open-world experience we've been craving ever since *Breath of the Wild*. It's also because the game has been delayed numerous times already.

Announced in 2017, *Biomutant* was originally scheduled for a 2018 release. Then it was pushed back to summer 2019. Most recently, publisher THQ Nordic revealed in an earnings call that *Biomutant* is slated for a 2020 release. Experiment 101 studio head Stefan Ljungqvist has implied that the content is all there; it's just a matter of the small team having time to test everything so that it's perfect when it launches. Will it launch cross-gen with the new consoles? Or can we expect an even busier spring 2020 next to *Animal Crossing* and *Doom Eternal*? Either way, we have a feeling it'll be worth the wait.



their own objectives, and lots of activities and events to explore and find in the open world," Ljungqvist said. "We felt it important to not clutter the map with icons, so you need to explore the world in order to experience a large part of the full game as our intention is to make this more of a journey and personal adventure for the player."

This open-ended approach to mission structure is meant to give players an incredible sense of freedom and immersion. This extends to the storytelling as well, which only includes brief cutscenes and instead keeps players in the moment.

"We are trying to keep as much as possible under the player's control instead of relying on the narrative being experienced through non-interactive cutscenes," Ljungqvist said. "It's a game after all. This might be perceived as different compared with

other games of this type and we rely on a much more character-centric delivery. This means we rely on our cast of 'weird in a good way' characters to deliver the narrative experience, so in terms of immersion we hope that keeping the player in control as much as possible will help to keep them engaged."

Given Experiment 101's previous open-world experience, it's no surprise that *Biomutant* will offer players plenty of ways to do said exploring. You can watersurf on a Googlide, dive underwater with an Octopod, and even traverse the toxic Death Zone with a Mekton.

Different mutant abilities will also let players get around the map in different ways, as well as give them an advantage in combat. Forming a protective, bouncy mucus bubble

or shooting lightning out of your fingers are just some ways to get the upper hand.

And that's where *Biomutant*'s "weird in a good way" character design rubber meets the "weird in

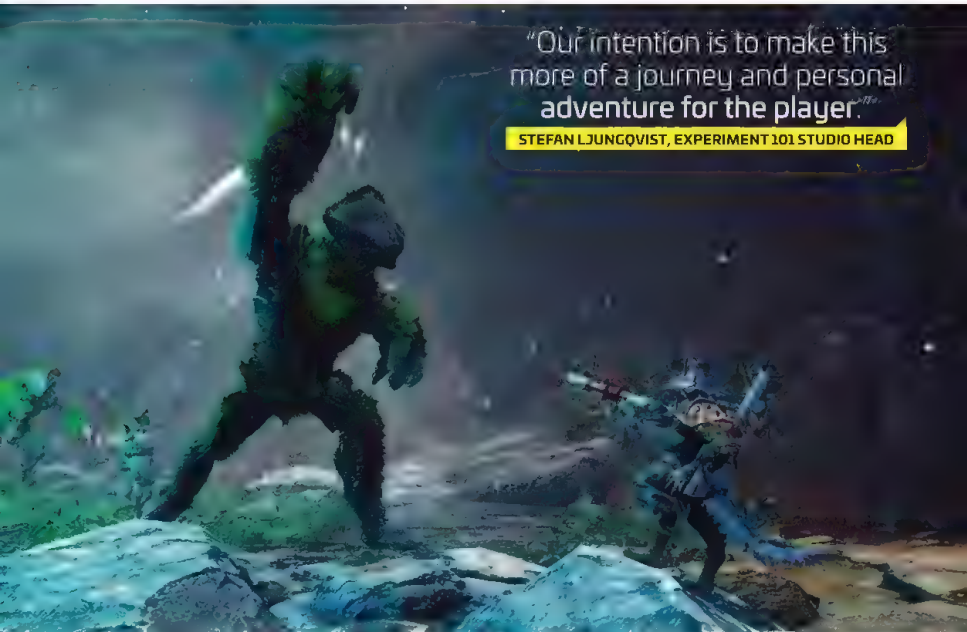
a good way" gameplay road. "The game's vision really started with the idea of the main player character being a mutated animal with the ability to mix-and-match melee and shooting mechanics in a free-flow, and

The imaginative enemy designs of *Biomutant* will offer variety and keep you on your toes.



"Our intention is to make this more of a journey and personal adventure for the player."

STEFAN LJUNGQVIST, EXPERIMENT 101 STUDIO HEAD



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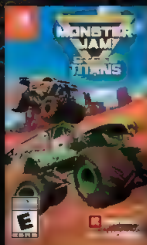
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## THE CUTEST RPG

*Biomutant* is, at its core, an open-world action RPG, and there are many ways the RPG aspects of that shine.

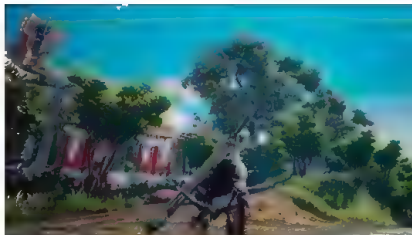
The first place where that happens is right on the character creator screen. Thankfully, *Biomutant* doesn't just make you pick a basic class and go from there. Instead, players can choose which of the game's six main attributes—Strength, Intellect, Agility, Vitality, Charisma, and Luck—they want to put more points into. Not only does this affect how the character plays, but it also affects how they look: A character with a lot of Intellect will have a larger cranium, and a character with high Strength will look buff as heck.

Besides your attributes, you can customize your character's physical appearance. *Biomutant*'s characters are adorable mutated critters, so that means you'll be selecting their fur type, and length and color of their coats.

we felt it was natural to set this in a martial art context," Ljungqvist said. "It would've been more challenging to give a photorealistic human soldier the ability to just pop up a mucus bubble around them or grow a mushroom in front of them and bounce away, but in this weird (in a good way) setting, it feels natural. So, an important part of choosing a more fantastic approach to the character design is that we can get away with crazier gameplay-centric abilities and unexpected ideas compared to if we made a photorealistic human-based setting."

Because you're playing as a mutated, anthropomorphic creature who's a master of melee combat, an expert marksman, and imbued with the power of mutations, combat in *Biomutant* is dynamic and completely up to the player. Since it is an RPG, players will start off by picking a class, but how they customize their weapons, melee abilities, and movesets is up to them.

"A key word in the combat experience is 'free-flow,'" Ljungqvist



explained, "meaning that our goal is to never stop the player in terms of being able to mix and match with melee, shooting and/or abilities while moving continuously (if you want). The game is also playable at your unique pace, meaning that it can be really fast paced if you're that type of player but also more tactical if you prefer that playstyle."

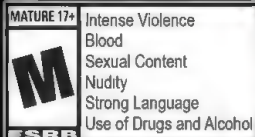
Enhancing the combat are the different ways you can spec out your weapons. For example, melee weapons can be single- or two-handed or dual-wield weapons that can inflict

This protective bubble Mutation also lets you bounce off enemies and reach higher places.





AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 18<sup>TH</sup>



NINTENDO  
SWITCH

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## PUTTING THE 'MUTANT' IN BIOMUTANT

In addition to your normal attributes and weapon customization, the Mutation System will let you further cater your character to fit your playing style. These are like the superpowers of the *Biomutant* world, and combining them with your melee and ranged attacks can create devastating effects.

### BIOMUTATIONS

Pretty much the name of the game, Biomutations will actually change your character's DNA and affect their physical appearance. One of the examples that Experiment 101 has thrown around are Crab Claws, which give you big old crab claws where your hands once were. You can pinch enemies or slam them on the ground.

### PSI-MUTATIONS

These mutations all revolve around some sort of telekinetic abilities. Whether that means using your brain power to toss an enemy around like a rag doll or shooting sparks out of your fingers, investing in PSI Mutations is the way to go if you want to feel like a furry Jedi.

### BIONIC ENHANCEMENTS

These aren't mutations in the traditional sense, but Bionic Enhancements basically let you turn your character into a cyborg. While we don't know much about these kinds of mutations, we do know that playing as a half-robot, half-raccoon who knows kung fu sounds awesome.

### SNOT BUBBLE

Okay, we're not totally sure what kind of mutation it is, or if it's even called a snot bubble, but that's what it looks like. This mutation lets you encase yourself in a green, goopy bubble to not only deflect bullets but bounce around and get to those hard-to-reach places. It's form and function combined.



"An important part of choosing a more fantastic approach to the character design is that we can get away with crazier gameplay-centric abilities."

### STEFAN LJUNGQVIST, EXPERIMENT 101 STUDIO HEAD

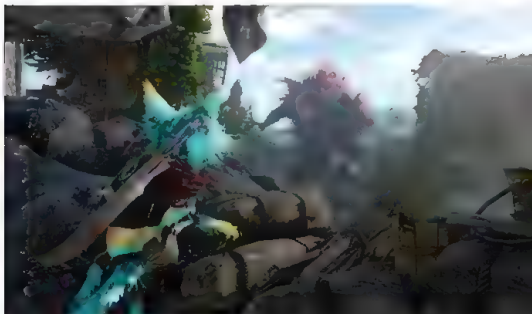
crush, pierce, or slash damage. You can add modifiers to these weapons to give them elemental damage potential, too. Knowing which combos to use on which enemies will be key.

"Some enemies obviously have different behaviors, so certain approaches are better than others

against certain enemies," Ljungqvist said. "The possibility of creating variation to the combat gameplay experience is in the player's hands."

The cohesiveness of these ideas and the ability to be creative comes from the small size of Experiment 101's studio. With only 20 developers working on such a huge game, there are obvious challenges, but the benefits are more freedom, more weirdness, and more goodness.

"We've been able to iterate fast and make quick decisions on necessary changes as the team works autonomously with both great freedom and responsibility towards the bigger vision," Ljungqvist said. "In essence, everyone on the team has a better chance to contribute to the game as a whole."





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CRYTEK



DEEP  
SILVER

preview

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER  
TECH. AND  
DEVELOPER  
TECH. AND  
PLATFORMS  
XBOX ONE, PS4  
SW TCH PC  
RELEASE DATE  
2020

# DYING LIGHT 2

CHOOSE YOUR OWN MISADVENTURE

BY JOSH HARMON

PREORDER

If you remember one thing about the 2015 open-world zombie game *Dying Light*, odds are good it's not the story. Sure, the tale of post-apocalyptic survival proved enjoyable enough, but it paled in comparison to the thrills of gameplay—the action-packed combat, dizzying parkour, and survival made all the more intense by a day-night cycle that turned the infected even more ferocious once the sun set.

With *Dying Light 2*, however, developer Techland is making storytelling a greater emphasis, aiming to deliver a dynamic narrative where player choices can have a serious impact on how events unfold and the state of the game world. Bringing the sort of adaptive story you might find in a classic top-down role-playing game to a richly detailed modern action game is no easy feat, so Tech-

**Developer Techland is making storytelling a greater emphasis, aiming to deliver a dynamic narrative.**



land tapped an expert in the field. Chris Avellone, a writer and designer who helped bring *Fallout 2*, *Planescape: Torment*, *Divinity: Original Sin II*, and dozens of other beloved titles to life.

It's a partnership that's paid off massively for the team, according to lead game designer Tymon Smektala. "Working with Chris Avellone is like attending a master class of non-linear narratives—he not only has tons of experience in creating such stories, but also is willing to share it with the guys on our internal team," he said, adding that Avellone's expertise was particularly helpful in building a branching story where every path and ending feels equally meaningful.

This dynamic story will unfold more than a decade after the events

From what we've seen, *The City* provides just as much exciting—and ethical—verticality as the first game.

## DEADER TOGETHER

Like the first *Dying Light* and Techland's previous forays into zombiedom, the *Dead Island* games, *Dying Light 2* will feature online cooperative play. "The game supports four-player co-op and you can play almost the whole of it [aside from some tutorial missions] in that mode," lead game designer Tymon Smektala told us.

But if the mode itself isn't a new addition, the experience of playing it will be a little different this time around, thanks to *Dying Light 2*'s emphasis on a branching story and dynamic world. "Co-op lends itself well to our approach to choices and consequences, where your decisions change the world around you," Smektala said. "With co-op you're either inviting others to your world or visiting other people's games, as well as their versions of the story, and their worlds." In other words, hopping in to help out a friend in co-op will be a little like entering an alternate universe where you can witness how things might have played out had you chosen differently.

"For me this is one of the most amazing aspects of *Dying Light 2*," Smektala said.







Factions like the Peacekeepers and the Scavengers jockey for control of The City.

of the past game and follow a new protagonist named Alden Caldwell. There's a good reason for that jump forward in time, Smektała told us. "There are a lot of games, comic books and movies that focus on the outbreak of the virus and the first days of the epidemic, and because of that it's mostly about the zombies, about dealing with that imminent threat," he said. "We wanted to create a world which is a little more

stable, where the threat is not new, to observe and wonder if an apocalypse of that scale would change something in our behavior. Having a game that takes place 15 years after the end of the world allowed us to let loose with our creativity and try to imagine how a world like that would look."

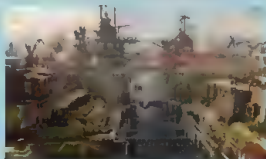
The result is a setting Techland describes as the "Modern Dark Ages," where survivors huddle together in a heavily fortified European metropolis that evokes the walled settlements common during the Medieval era. Simply enough, it's just called The City.

What truly sets The City apart, Smektała told us, is how it will change based on the choices you make throughout the story. "Some of these changes are really huge—[for example], you uncover a big part of the open world by activating the dam and lowering the water level. Some are smaller but have a big impact

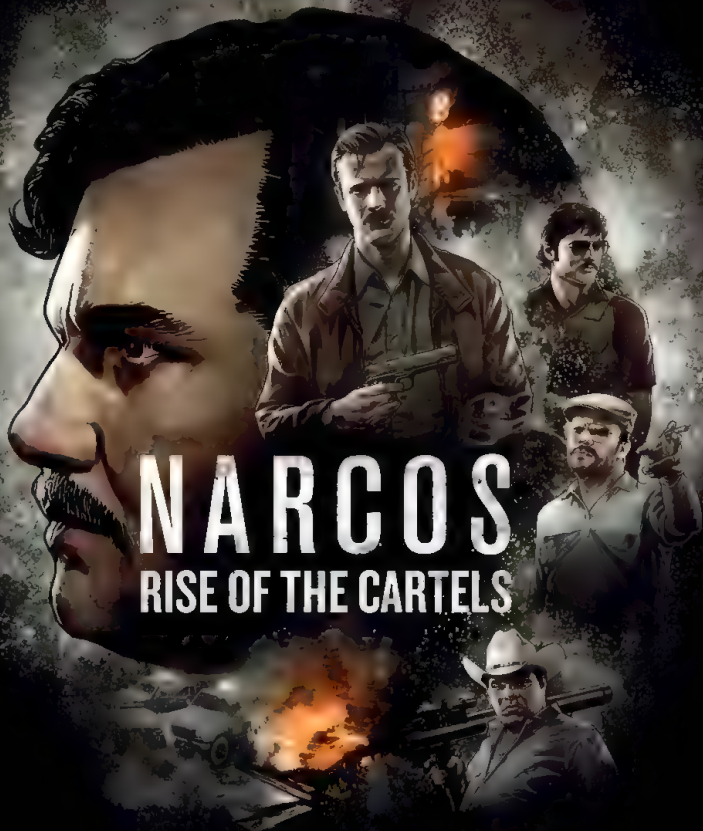
on gameplay [like the] introduction of a new enemy. Some are really cosmetic. But all of them allow you to create your own version of The City."

Of course, players can also expect to enjoy the exciting gameplay of the original *Dying Light*, complete with some new twists. The gameplay we've seen features plenty of the same mix of parkour and combat, as well as the same deadly approach to nightfall. Smektała told us players will encounter all the infected types from the first game "and much, much more."

Like the most memorable sequels, *Dying Light 2* looks poised to deliver more of what we loved while finding room for expansion and improvement. According to Smektała, Techland learned a lot from its work on the first game, but "the biggest lesson was the confidence to believe in our own ideas. We're a grown, mature, confident game developer now, and we hope to prove it with *Dying Light 2*."



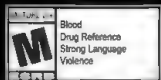
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# NARCOS

## RISE OF THE CARTELS

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The image is a promotional preview for the video game Nioh 2. It features two main character portraits at the top: a man in traditional Japanese armor on the left and a woman in a patterned kimono on the right. The background is dark and atmospheric. A red banner at the top left says 'PREVIEW'. A large red '2' is part of the title 'Nioh 2'. To the right of the title is a 'PREORDER' button with a star icon. Below the title, it says 'A NEW DEMON SLAYER ARISES'. On the left side, there is a list of publisher, developer, and platform information. On the right side, there is a paragraph of text about the game's development and a quote from the team. The bottom of the image features a close-up portrait of a woman with a serious expression.

PREVIEW

# Nioh 2

BY MOLLIE L. PATTERSON



PREORDER

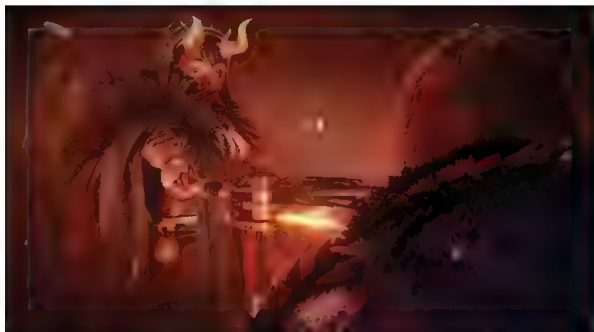
A NEW DEMON SLAYER ARISES

PUBLISHED BY  
SONY INTERACTIVE  
ENTERTAINMENT  
DEVELOPER  
KOEI TECMO,  
TEAM NINJA  
PLATFORMS  
PS4  
RELEASE DATE  
03.13.2020

When Koei Tecmo revived the project after nearly 10 years of dormancy, it was easy to initially assume that, in its resurrected form, *Nioh* might simply be “*Dark Souls* with samurai.” In truth, the game was far more than that. Though it did borrow some inspiration in gameplay challenge and intricacy from FromSoftware’s works, its combat style, character building, environments, and more worked to present an adventure that felt unlike anything else.

The team knew that there were certain areas where they could improve a sequel.





Now, three years after the original game's release, the men and women of Team Ninja are hard at work on *Nioh 2*. While its predecessor has gained quite a fan following, the team knew that there were certain areas where they could improve a sequel to offer players an even better experience.

"The original *Nioh*, being a brand-new game, was somewhat less polished in certain aspects," Fumihiko Yasuda, *Nioh 2*'s producer, told us. "The tutorial wasn't the most user friendly, and the game balance lacked fine-tuning midway through the game. We gained a good

understanding of these two notable problems through voices from the player community, and as a result, we sought to solve these issues from a very early phase."

Of course, a sequel is more than just fixing some of the weaker parts of an earlier game—it's also about expanding and improving upon elements that were already great. For *Nioh 2*, Team Ninja knew it wanted to make combat even deeper and more satisfying. One aspect of that is Yokai Shift, a new ability that lets players become possessed by their Guardian Spirit in order to gain additional powers and abilities. Using the Yokai

■ *Nioh 2*'s world blends Japanese history with myth, making for some memorable character designs.

## HELP FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

A collection of 150+ new weapons, armor, and skills, along with a new "Yokai Shift" system that lets players become possessed by their Guardian Spirit in order to gain additional powers and abilities.

6. The game's story is a blend of Japanese history and myth, making for some memorable character designs. The game's world is a blend of Japanese history and myth, making for some memorable character designs.

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"The customization system is designed to match or surpass any of its peers that will be available in 2020."

FUMIHIKO YASUDA  
NIOH 2 PRODUCER

Shift taps into one of three specializations, with Brute focusing on more powerful attacks, Feral on speed, and Phantom on longer-range options.

Backing up Yokai Shift and other expanded combat options will be *Nioh 2*'s new skill tree. Now, players will have a far wider range of options for customizing their playstyle, and weapons themselves will earn their own skill points. That way, players won't have to use points that could have gone toward improving more favorite weapons just to try out a different class of offensive tools.

There's one element of custom-

ization in *Nioh 2* that may come as a huge shock to a lot of players, however: the ability to craft the main character. While the blonde-haired Irish warrior William helmed the original *Nioh*, this time around, *Nioh 2*'s protagonist is fully customizable, down to their looks and gender.

"The previous game was about William's journey, and had no room for character creation, but [that] was one of the most requested features for a sequel," Yasuda explained. "In response to the requests, we decided to take on this challenge. The customiza-

tion system is designed to match or surpass any of its peers that will be available in 2020, and the level of freedom goes far and wide, so we're confident that our fans will be pleased with it."

While we're sure that fans will indeed enjoy that new addition, it's looking like there's going to be a lot to be pleased with in *Nioh 2*. After establishing itself as its own entity far from the shadow of the *Dark Souls* series, Koei Tecmo's tale of demons and *daimyos* looks to have a bright—or, given the game's settings, maybe we should say dark—future ahead. **C**

■ Different weapons will earn their own skill points, allowing you to level up their combat effectiveness.



# ZOMBIE ARMY

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preview

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# TRIALS OF MANA

REWORKED, REMADE—AND FINALLY  
RELEASED IN AMERICA

BY MOLLIE L. PATTERSON

## FACT FILE

PUBLISHER  
SQUARE ENIX  
DEVELOPER  
SQUARE ENIX  
PLATFORMS  
PS4, SWITCH  
RELEASE DATE  
04.24.2020

In 1995, Japanese gamers received *Seiken Densetsu 3*, the ambitious follow-up to the popular Super Nintendo adventure RPG *Secret of Mana*. Unfortunately, even as the game set new standards for gameplay and visuals on Nintendo's 16-bit console, *Seiken Densetsu 3* would never see release outside of its home country.

That is, until 2019, when the game, now titled *Trials of Mana*, was finally released in the West as part of the

compilation *Collection of Mana*. However, giving players around the world access to the original game wasn't Square Enix's only plan. At the same time, the company was hard at work on a standalone, fully 3D remake of the game—one that would honor the original while updating it for a whole new generation.

"I feel that the reason why it continues to be considered a legendary title almost 25 years later, even in the many regions where it was

unreleased, is because the *Trials of Mana* universe, with its delicate and warm graphics, still maintains its charm as strong as ever even today," *Mana* series producer Masaru Oyamada recently told us.

"Since this remake is being made 25 years after the original release in Japan, and because the original was never even released outside of Japan, we started the project with the notion of remaking it into a modern game," added the game's producer,

"Since this remake is being made 25 years after the original release in Japan...we started the project with the notion of **remaking it into a modern game.**"

#### TRIALS OF MANA PRODUCER SHINICHI TATSUKE



■ In an update to the combat system, you'll now need to use aerial attacks to hit flying enemies

Shinichi Tatsuke. "Specifically, we created it based on how we imagined *Seiken Densetsu 3* might have been like if it had been released in 2020."

When thinking about how to bring the game into the modern era, the team started by looking at elements like the graphics and camera system. Tatsuke said that, initially, they considered doing a top-down

camera, but switched to a third-person perspective to make the game feel more immersive and modern. From that, they made the characters' proportions more realistic than their original 2D versions, set out to modernize the game's visuals overall, and worked on adding voiceovers, arranged background music, and other updated elements.

## SIX CHOICES, ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

Providing a twist on the previous games in the series, *Trials of Mana* first asks players to choose one main character and two partner characters from a select on of six choices. Each of those picks will then not only determine what abilities your team will bring to battles, but also various narrative elements throughout the game.

"In addition to each of the protagonists being different before the journey is embarked upon, the story will unfold somewhat differently depending on who is chosen as the main character," explained *Trials of Mana* producer Shinichi Tatsuke. "Also, the dialogue in the extra conversations and cutscenes changes a little depending on which companions are chosen. [And] the combination of three characters chosen also affects the battles in a big way."

"The journey of the six main characters is a wonderful story—one that allows people who are now adults to recall their own experiences when they were first captivated by them back then," said *Mana* series producer Masaru Oyama. "For first-time players as well, I think that this game will provide the same kind of heartfelt experience, no matter the generation."



All of those stylistic changes would mean other parts of the game would need updates as well, especially the original *Trials of Mana*'s combat.

"We've changed it greatly from the original," Tatsuke explained. "Specifically, weak attacks and power attacks—we've included combo attacks that trigger depending on how you put those together. Abilities like magic, which couldn't be evaded in the original, can now be evaded because we've included a red display that indicates where hits will land."

The team also worked to find other ways to make *Trials of Mana*'s combat deeper and more exciting, such as incorporating the concept of height—something that really couldn't exist in the original *Seiken*

"Rather than a classic RPG, we aimed for a modern RPG when creating this battle system."

**TRIALS OF MANA PRODUCER  
SHINICHI TATSUKE**

*Densetsu 3*. Now, not only will players need to use aerial attacks to hit flying enemies, but height will come into play outside of combat as well, such as jumping onto or over obstacles to find hidden items.

"Rather than a classic RPG, we aimed for a modern RPG when creating this battle system," Tatsuke added. "On the other hand, I believe that some people may not be as partial to action, so we've prepared

difficulty settings meant for those players as well."

That, and many other additions, will hopefully help the game finally get the worldwide attention it deserved nearly 20 years ago. It may have taken a while to reach our shores, but between the original version included on *Collection of Mana*, and the completely overhauled *Trials of Mana*, the wait will at least have been worth it.

The class system allows you to give party members different combat abilities and specializations.





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PREORDER

# LEGO STAR WARS: THE SKYWALKER SAGA

A LEGEND MORE THAN 40 YEARS IN THE MAKING

BY JOSH HARMON

## FACT FILE

PUBLISHER  
TTGAMES  
TECH AND  
DEVELOPER  
LEGO  
PLATFORMS  
XBOX ONE, PS4,  
SWITCH, PC  
RELEASE DATE  
2020

With December's release of *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*, Disney and Lucasfilm brought a cinematic saga that began in 1977 to its conclusion. Later this year, TT Games will attempt to pull off a similar feat with *LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga*, an epic game spanning the events of all nine films.

Since the series first launched in 2005, the *LEGO Star Wars* games have adapted the stories of the movies into family-friendly romps full of lighthearted combat, humorous twists, and a seemingly endless supply of LEGO studs to collect. Past entries have covered *Episodes 1* through *VII*, so it might be natural to assume

that *The Skywalker Saga* is built on updated or remastered versions of the content in those games. But as game director James McLoughlin told us, that's not the case. "The concept of a remaster never really came up," he said.

Instead, the team focused on building an all-new experience, a decision that allowed them to add polish and depth across the board. Among the most obvious additions are the updated shooting and melee combat, which are designed to remain accessible to younger fans while rewarding more skilled players for experimentation.

"We have a new combo system that the player can opt to use where



they will receive stud bonuses and damage modifiers for the amount of unique chained combos they string together," McLoughlin explained. "With shooting, we have added a new over-the-shoulder, aiming-down-sights-style method and a dynamic, ragdoll-style reaction to the enemy troops, meaning that you can shoot enemies in different parts of the body to receive different reactions and more importantly more dynamic and amusing takedowns."

Another benefit to TT Games' ground-up approach is *The Skywalker Saga*'s stunning new visual style.

Since the series first launched in 2005, the *LEGO Star Wars* games have adapted the stories of the movies into family-friendly romps.



McLoughlin told us that experimenting with different looks is intrinsic to the LEGO games' DNA, pointing to past *LEGO Dimensions* and *The LEGO Movie Videogame*. But *The Skywalker Saga* might be the biggest departure yet, with a charming mix of near-photorealistic environments and LEGO minifigs and builds that feel like they truly exist in the game world—picking up dirt and snow from their surroundings. There's also a new camera angle that brings players closer to the action. "We wanted to get more cinematic; we wanted to make the player feel like they were in the *Star Wars* universe, so one of the natural choices was to change the

camera and get right down into it," McLoughlin said.

For more than a decade, the *LEGO Star Wars* games have defined the relationship many fans have with the films, offering a fun, charming, and often hysterical way to spend more time with their favorite characters on memorable adventures. For these players, *The Skywalker Saga* will be as much of a capstone on the *Star Wars* saga as *Episode IX*. It's a challenge, and an honor, that means everything to the team at TT Games, McLoughlin told us.

"We believe in the power of story, and this is one of the best stories to tell," he said. ☺

■ The effect of mixing detailed environments with LEGO bricks and minifigures is visually striking.



## THE GNK'S ALL HERE

The *LEGO* games are known for their absolutely massive rosters of characters, diving deep into their respective universes to let fans play as just about everyone they could hope for. To take just one example, 2016's *LEGO Star Wars: The Force Awakens* topped 200 playable characters.

So of course, we had to ask game director James McLoughlin if he had a favorite among *The Skywalker Saga*'s roster. "One of the more loved characters within the office, aside from Darth Vader and the big hitters, is actually the GNK Droid," he said. "We have made a few quests for this droid type and, of course he is playable because he is clearly one of the cutest droids around. We often find that we gravitate towards the droids as they have a ton of personality for often non-speaking characters. GNK!"

As for the Walmart Gamecenter crew, we've got two characters on our onshot wishlist: *Episode IX*'s diminutive droidsmith, Babu Frik, and the galaxy's cuddliest meme machine, Baby Yoda





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GAME OF THE MONTH

## LIFE IS STRANGE 2

BROTHERLY LOVE

BY MICHAEL GORDOFF

## FACT FILE

**PUBLISHER**  
SQUARE ENIX  
**DEVELOPER**  
DONTNOD  
**ENTERTAINMENT**  
**PLATFORMS**  
XBOX ONE, PS4  
**RELEASE DATE**  
02 03 2020

Dontnod Entertainment set a new standard for interactive storytelling when it created the first *Life is Strange*. Sure, games like *Heavy Rain* paved the way with branching narratives and tough choices, but Dontnod's contribution came in its emotional complexity and cinematic approach. (Protagonist Max Caulfield's ability to turn back time and change outcomes was a refreshing gameplay mechanic, too.)

*Life is Strange 2* is, in some ways, simpler and more straightforward in its approach. You won't be rewinding events and using photographs to explore alternate timelines. But where *Life is Strange 2* streamlines its approach to storytelling, its themes, cinematic techniques, art direction, and overall emotional complexity

help it transcend its genre.

Taking place in the same universe as the first game, *Life is Strange 2* shares some subtle but direct connections to its predecessor. But instead of continuing the adventures of Max Caulfield and Chloe Price, this game

follows brothers Sean and Daniel Diaz after a tragedy forces them to flee their homes and become fugitives. Sixteen-year-old Sean not only has to cope with the death of his father, but also protect his nine-year-old brother. That's easier said than done,





By taking away the ability to rewrite your choices, *Life is Strange 2* becomes a story about consequence.



■ Without time-travel gimmicks, *Life is Strange 2* is all about Sean and Daniel's relationship.

since Daniel just so happens to have previously dormant telekinetic abilities that he's just learning to control.

*Life is Strange 2*'s largest divergence from its predecessor is that you're not playing as Daniel, the one with the (for lack of a better phrase) superpowers. As Sean, you have to bear the responsibility of teaching your younger brother not only how to control his abilities, but how to

tell the difference between right and wrong. The overall trajectory of the game's story will pretty much take you to the same places, regardless of decisions you make, but your choices (and how much of a positive impression you make on Daniel) largely decide how the emotionally explosive ending will play out.

By taking away the ability to rewrite your choices, *Life is Strange 2*

becomes a story about consequence, living in the moment, and what brotherhood and family mean to you. Maybe you don't have a little brother you've had to take care of while running from the law for a crime you didn't commit, but the emotional connection between Sean and Daniel will resonate with anyone who's ever loved someone else more than themselves. ☺





101

## RILEY COOPER

CREATIVE DIRECTOR, *NEED FOR SPEED HEAT*

Since its debut way back in 1994, the *Need for Speed* franchise has become one of the longest-running and best-known names in all of racing. The series has provided speed freaks all sorts of pulse-pounding challenges over the years, and the latest iteration, *Need for Speed Heat*, hasn't slowed down one bit. To find out more about what makes the game's engines rev, we spoke to creative director Riley Cooper.

**WGC:** After the release of *Need for Speed Payback*, what did the team at Ghost Games want to do as a follow-up, and how did that translate into *Need for Speed Heat*?

**Riley Cooper:** After *Need for Speed Payback* there were many adjustments we wanted to make, and one of those was to the narrative. We really wanted to make more room for the player to put themselves in the game, so we added character selection and customization. We also had our NPCs do more of the storytelling, and left the player's character a little less defined by us so that they could inhabit them more. Another adjustment players responded to favorably was bringing cops

back to free-roam, making them the primary adversary in gameplay and the story to challenge progression.

**WGC:** A racing game is only as good as the locations it provides players to race in. What was the inspiration behind *Need for Speed Heat's* Palm City?

**RC:** Palm City is inspired by Miami and the iconic landmarks and roads from the Southeastern U.S. We wanted to bring the vibrant culture there to life in a way that felt perfect for our driving experience. We used this inspiration to create really unique districts [that deliver] a compelling variety of landscapes. Also, Palm City has been built from the ground up to support high-speed driving and utilizes geometric road design used in real-world road layouts for more predictability and visibility.

**WGC:** An interesting twist to *Palm City* is how the experience changes whether you're racing around in the day or at night. Can you tell us more?

**RC:** Day provides the fastest way to earn bank which you use to purchase cars, parts, and customization, whereas night provides the fastest way to earn rep, which

### GAME HIGHLIGHTS

NEED FOR SPEED PAYBACK  
TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD  
LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

unlocks those cars and parts. Players can take their time to make choices and do the things they want [during the day], whereas night has an aggressive police task force set on shutting down street racing, which means you've got to be tactical and quick in the street races you take on. Day is [also] a great time to take on much of our open-world content due to the less aggressive police force, whereas at night you've got to be focused on earning as much rep as you can without wrecking or getting busted—because if you do, you'll lose much of what you've earned. Ultimately, day's sanctioned races are thrilling, while night feels dangerous.

**WGC:** Customization has become a big part of the racing game experience. What did the team want to emphasize in *Need for Speed Heat's* customization options?

**RC:** We've added character customization for the first time, so that was completely new for us. Engine swaps allow lower-powered cars to exceed their limits and compete with the best, as well as change the way the car sounds. Exhaust tuning allows you to really dial in your car's sound for a really personalized experience. Lastly, rather than buying cars as a type, as you did in *Payback*, you now build your cars to type by the parts you equip in *Heat*. So if you want to build a Volkswagen Golf GTI with a really raw throaty exhaust, an eight-cylinder engine that crushes drift events, you can do that.

**WGC:** If you had to pick one of the cars you've owned in your life to use in an attempt to win races on the streets of Palm City, which would it be?

**RC:** I've owned an Audi A4. I really liked it. In *Need for Speed Heat* we've got the 2017 Audi S5 Sportback Performance and the 2019 Audi R8 V10 Performance Coupe. Those are cars I set goals on unlocking, customizing, and crushing in. I've done that. The handling characteristics really did feel familiar to me. Now I've just got to get a test drive in those models in real life to complete the experience. 🏁

We really wanted to make more room for the player to put themselves in the game, so we added character selection and customization.





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